

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 15 (2011) 1287–1290

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

WCES-2011

The relationship between parental perfectionism and child perfectionism in a sample of Iranian families

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship of dimensions of parental perfectionism including self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed with their children's perfectionism in a sample of Iranian families. Four hundred students (213 girls, 187 boys) along with their parents (342 fathers, 364 mothers) were included in this study. Both students and their parents were asked to complete the Tehran Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (TMPS; Besharat, 2007). The results indicated that some aspects of parental perfectionism were associated with children perfectionism. It can be concluded that parental perfectionistic characteristics would influence the development of perfectionistic characteristics in children.

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Keywords: parenting; perfectionism; interpersonal relationships; family

1. Introduction

Perfectionism is an irrational believe that persons have toward themselves and the surrounding environment. Perfectionist individual believe that he or she and his surrounding environment must be perfect and all of the attempts have to be done without mistake. Perfectionism is a personality structure and specified by striving for perfect, unexceptionable and adhere rigidly to extremely high standards in performance with tendency to assess behavior in a critical manner (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Hewitt, & Flett, 1991a; Stoeber, Otto, 2006). Hewitt, & Flett (1991a; 1991b) conceptualized perfectionism as three dimensions model: self-oriented perfectionism (SOP; demanding perfection of oneself), other-oriented perfectionism (OOP; demanding perfection of others), and socially-prescribed perfectionism (SPP; perceiving that others are demanding perfection of oneself). McArdel and Duda (2004), concluded that studies concerned with the etiology of perfectionism have taken one of two directions. One line of research has examined whether reported perfectionism in parents foster children's propensity to also exhibit perfectionistic tendencies. Others have taken a different approach, exploring the significance of particular facets of parent-child interactions with respect to differential beliefs, standards, and self-appraisal processes associated with this construct.

Family affects the characteristics of its members in different ways. Relational and individual characteristic of parents are two influential factors on children characteristics. Perfectionism as individual characteristics can influence the children's perfectionism. Several investigator concur with family and social environment role in

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development of perfectionism in children and believe that perfectionism is rooted in childhood experiences specially child-parent interactions (Blatt, 1995; Burns, 1980; Hamachek, 1978; Sorotzkin, 1998; Vieth & Trull, 1999). Hamachek (1978) viewed perfectionism as a manner of behaving and thinking about the behavior. He distinguished between normal and neurotic perfectionism and suggested that normal perfectionism is the result of positive or negative modeling from parent. On the other hand, neurotic perfectionism can be developed in two emotional environments including conditional approval and nonapproval or inconsistent approval environments. Burns (1980), suggested that children learn perfectionism in a way of interaction with perfectionistic parents. He asserted that perfectionistic parent reinforce positively their children for excellent performance and react to their fails with disappointment, anxiety, and agitation because this parent view child's failure as a reflection of their childrearing skills. Children that have perfectionistic parent forecast that failure lead to lose acceptance of parent and because their self-esteem formed based on parent's acceptance, fear of failure and avoidance of loss created in them gradually. So children begin to fear of failure and seeking perfect and their reactions more reinforce their parent's behavior.

The study of Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, (1991) is the first study that enterprise to assessing role of parental factors on development of child perfectionism. In their study that performed on girl college students obtained evidence of relationship between perfectionism in girls and their mothers but not significant relationship obtained between perfectionism in girls and their fathers. Vieth and Trull, (1999) in a sample of graduate student assessed the relationship between parent and their children perfectionism. They found that self-oriented perfectionism was related in both groups. Girls and boys with self-oriented perfectionism in their homogeneous parents but no significant relation for other component of perfectionism was found. Thereto socially prescribed perfectionism was related in daughters and their mothers. Enns, Cox, & Clara, (2002) found that parental perfectionism, that specified by high expectancies from themselves and their children, was related to both types of perfectionism, adaptive and maladaptive in children. Rice, Tucker, & Desmond, (2008) obtained medial convergence between parental perfectionism and child perfectionism. Clark and Coker, (2009) found any significant relationship between maternal perfectionism and child perfectionism. Based on the previous research, the main aim of the present study was to examine the relationship of parental dimensions of perfectionism including self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed with their children's perfectionism dimensions in a sample of Iranian families. It was hypothesized that parental perfectionism is related to children perfectionism.

2. Method

2.1. Sample

The population of this study included all of Tehran's high school students during academic year 2009-2010. Sample selected by stratified random sampling. Subjects were asked to complete the Tehran Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (TMPS; Besharat, 2007). Four hundred students (213 girls, 187 boys) from Tehran high schools in sections 8, 10, 11 and 19 along with their parents (342 fathers, 364 mothers) selected as ultimate sample were supplemented carefully the questionnaires.

2.2. Instruments

Tehran Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (TMPS; Besharat, 2007)- The TMPS is a 30 question test and assesses three dimensions (SOP, OOP, and SPP) in five point Likert rating scale from 1 to 5. Minimum and maximum score for each subscale is 10 and 50, respectively. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for SOP, OOP, and SPP were calculated 0.90, 0.91 and 0.81 that show scale's good internal consistency. Correlation coefficients for 78 participants were calculated 2 times with a four-week interval between measurements. These coefficients for SOP, OOP, and SPP were $r = .85$, $r = .79$ and $r = .84$, respectively. All coefficients were significant at $P < 0.001$ level. At the same time validity of TMPS was calculated through simultaneously performing Inventory of Interpersonal Problems, Mental Health Inventory, and Neuroticism and Extraversion subscales of NEOPI-R personality inventory for participants. The results confirmed the TMPS validity indices (Besharat, 2007).

3. Results

Mean and standard deviation scores for parental and child perfectionism were as follows, respectively: 28.51 and 9.98 for paternal SOP; 29.05 and 6.53 for maternal SOP; 30.58 and 5.94 for child SOP; 32.93 and 6.43 for paternal OOP; 32.11 and 6.55 for maternal OOP; 32.08 and 6.30 for child OOP; 29.92 and 6.23 for paternal SPP; 28.78 and 6.38 for maternal SPP; 31.85 and 6.27 for child SOP. Results of Pearson's correlation test are shown in table 1. These results confirm the research's hypothesis.

Table 1. Pearson correlations between parental dimensions of perfectionism and children's dimensions of perfectionism

| parental perfectionism | children perfectionism | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------|--------|
| | SOP | OOP | SPP |
| paternal SOP | .121* | .094 | .128* |
| paternal OOP | .018 | .197** | .154** |
| paternal SPP | .075 | .215** | .194** |
| maternal SOP | .122* | .116* | .062 |
| maternal OOP | .082 | .120* | .130** |
| maternal SPP | .113* | .144** | .159** |

SOP= self-oriented perfectionism; OOP= other-oriented perfectionism; SPP= socially-prescribed perfectionism

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$

Then, for determining parental perfectionism dimensions contribution in specifying child perfectionism variances, dimensions of parental perfectionism analyzed as predictor variables and dimensions of child perfectionism analyzed as criterion variables in regression equation. Variance analysis results and regression statistic attributes amongst average point of child perfectionism with parental perfectionism's dimensions are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Results of regression analysis with parental dimensions of perfectionism as predictors and children's dimensions of perfectionism as dependent variables

| | F | R | R ² | SE | β | t |
|--|---------|-------|----------------|------|---------|---------|
| child self-oriented perfectionism | | | | | | |
| Regression | 2.015 | 0.173 | 0.030 | 5.90 | | |
| paternal self-oriented perfectionism | | | | | 0.110 | 1.756 |
| paternal other-oriented perfectionism | | | | | -0.067 | -1.105 |
| paternal socially-prescribed perfectionism | | | | | 0.017 | 0.282 |
| maternal self-oriented perfectionism | | | | | 0.059 | 0.952 |
| maternal other-oriented perfectionism | | | | | 0.019 | 0.305 |
| maternal socially-prescribed perfectionism | | | | | 0.067 | 1.193 |
| child other-oriented perfectionism | | | | | | |
| Regression | 5.121** | 0.269 | 0.073 | 6.12 | | |
| paternal self-oriented perfectionism | | | | | -0.087 | -1.416 |
| paternal other-oriented perfectionism | | | | | 0.142 | 2.392* |
| paternal socially-prescribed perfectionism | | | | | 0.163 | 2.718** |
| maternal self-oriented perfectionism | | | | | 0.052 | 0.853 |
| maternal other-oriented perfectionism | | | | | 0.003 | 0.053 |
| maternal socially-prescribed perfectionism | | | | | 0.079 | 1.420 |
| child socially-prescribed perfectionism | | | | | | |
| Regression | 4.168** | 0.245 | 0.060 | 6.13 | | |
| paternal self-oriented perfectionism | | | | | 0.020 | 0.324 |
| paternal other-oriented perfectionism | | | | | 0.059 | 0.993 |
| paternal socially-prescribed perfectionism | | | | | 0.129 | 2.137* |
| maternal self-oriented perfectionism | | | | | -0.063 | -1.031 |
| maternal other-oriented perfectionism | | | | | 0.073 | 1.185 |
| maternal socially-prescribed perfectionism | | | | | 0.110 | 1.977* |

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$

4. Discussion

The results of the present study showed that parental perfectionism dimensions are related to child perfectionism dimensions. Additional analyses of these findings showed that dimensions of parental perfectionism could predict variances in the child perfectionism dimensions. These findings which are in line with results from previous researches (Camadan, 2010; Cook & Kearney, 2009; Enns et al., 2002; Frost et al., 1991; Rice et al., 2008; Soenens, Elliot, Goossens, Vansteenkiste, Luyten, & Duriez, 2005; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Luyten, Duriez, & Goossens, 2005; Vieth, & Trull, 1999), may be explained upon the following possibilities:

Children modeling their perfectionistic parent and becoming perfectionist themselves (Hamachek, 1978). Blatt (1995) also hypothesized that adolescents who perceive their parents as setting high standards and as being responsive only when certain norms and standards are met, may develop a self-image in which the pursuit of perfectionistic expectations is crucial.

Role identity theory (Stryker, 1968; as cited in Buxe & Van Wel, 2008) suggests that life course transitions positively influence the emotional closeness between children and their parents and adolescents move into the same adult roles as their parents, or their experiences become similar to those of their parents. As a consequence children will be more likely to understand their parents and identifying with them (Buxe & Van Wel, 2008).

According to Hemachek (1978) view of nonapproval and conditional approval, it can be concluded that one characteristic of perfectionistic family is being nonapproval. Perfectionistic parents set high standards and expectations for children that often are unattainable and children could not accomplish them. These parents, even providing observe this standards by children, don't admit and set higher standards or expectations for children. They often don't confirm their children's behaving and ever desire that their children were better than what they are. So led the child to become perfectionist. Conditional approval is another characteristic of perfectionistic family. Love and acceptance of perfectionistic parents are dependent on fulfilling their child to determinate norms and standards (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Duriez, & Goossens, 2006). Therefore in perfectionistic family, children enroute seeking love and acceptance of parent, led toward perfectionism.

With consideration to learning theory, that stated when an action reinforced more probable to perform again, when consequences of set high standards for self and others is positive (for example, other's acceptance and support, achieving to desires, success, higher self-esteem and self-worth) the person is reinforced and set high standards for him or herself and others, and will accept other's standards too.

Based on the findings of the present study it can be concluded that parental perfectionistic characteristics would influence the development of perfectionistic characteristics in children.

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